



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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King, Jefferson, Lewis counties site of most gypsy moth catches this summer

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Agriculture announced today (Oct. 16) that 59 gypsy moths were caught in Washington during the department's 2003 summer trapping program. As part of the annual trapping program, 21,000 small, cardboard traps were placed in trees and shrubs around the state and monitored from June to September.

Of the moths caught, 21 were trapped in an area east of Bellevue, 14 at Port Ludlow in Jefferson County, eight near Mayfield Dam in Lewis County, five east of Lake Union in Seattle, three in Fife, and eight at single trap locations in Western Washington. No moths were caught in Eastern Washington.

An average of 77 moths were caught during each of the last ten years. In 2002, 17 moths were detected.

The gypsy moth is one of the worst invasive pest insects ever brought into the U.S. The moth causes millions of dollars of environmental and economic damage in the U.S. each year in 19 states in the East and upper Midwest, but not in Washington.

State entomologists must now determine whether it's likely that a reproducing population of gypsy moths is present at catch sites. That decision will be made in November based on the number of moths caught and a physical inspection of catch sites for other evidence of gypsy moth activity.

DNA analysis, currently being conducted at a U.S. Department of Agriculture laboratory in Massachusetts, is necessary to reveal whether the caught moths are the Asian or European variety. The Asian variety presents a much greater threat than European gypsy moth because it eats evergreen as well as deciduous trees, and its female can fly. Asian infestations can spread more quickly and further, and they are more difficult to pinpoint.

If a reproducing population is present, state entomologists will propose a treatment be conducted next spring to eradicate the infestation. Any proposed treatment will comply with provisions of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Persons with questions on the state Department of Agriculture's gypsy moth program may call the department's toll-free hotline (1-800-443-6684) or visit the agency's Web site at www.agr.wa.gov.

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